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AS YOU SEW

EC 69-457

LACES

By Gerda Petersen
Extension Clothing Specialist

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Lace is a combination of beauty and luxury. It may be coarse and heavy or fine and sheer. Laces made from a number of different fibers are available, such as cotton, silk, wool, nylon, rayon, and acetate. Some laces may be bonded to another fabric to give body and to eliminate the need for lining.

Lace provides opportunities for creative effects. It may be used as an all-over patterned fabric when backed with another fabric. Another effect can be achieved when the body of the dress is backed with an opaque fabric and the sleeves are unlined. The sheer look may be preserved in the shoulder area by using net as a backing.

Soft laces may be draped and used in full gathered skirts. The same lace may be given a crisp effect when backed with a crisp underlining.

Some laces have a finished edge, generally scalloped. The dress may be planned to take advantage of the scallops in a neckline or other trim.

Lace can be used as an edging or as an insertion. Design motifs can be cut and appliqued on another fabric of a solid color.

Selection of Pattern

The weight or coarseness of the lace determines the style of garment. Choose a simple pattern with few seams. Avoid patterns that have a center front seam. Since lace has a surface pattern of its own, its beauty will be set off to best advantage when backed with a fabric of harmonizing solid color.

Linings and Interfacings

Lace generally requires an underlining (backing) to give it body and strength. Taffeta, satin, or polished cotton when used as underlinings give both body and weight. They also give a sheer.

Batiste, sheath linings, sheer de Swa, and lightweight silk are also possibilities for underlinings and give a softer effect.

Marquisette and net provide added strength to lace and the lace retains the sheer look. If net is used as a neckline

facing, instead of the lace itself, there will not be a conflict of the double surface pattern.

Bonded laces may not require a lining if the backing is opaque.

The use of interfacing will depend on pattern style.

Laying the Pattern—Cutting—Marking

Most laces have a right and wrong side. The side on which the cord outlining the design pattern stands out or lies on top is the right side.

Lay lace fabric and cut as you would a printed fabric, keeping in mind matching and placing of design motifs.

Cut underlining (backing) from the same pattern as the outer fabric. Mark darts and construction details on the wrong side of the underlining, not on the lace. Tailor's tacks or tailor's chalk will be the best methods for marking these details.

Getting Ready to Sew

Test your machine on a sample first. Try a stitch length of 10 to 12 stitches per inch and loosened tension. Mercerized cotton thread is usually satisfactory. The finer lace may need a fine cotton thread. Synthetic threads may be used on nylon or other synthetics. Some laces may need to be stitched on tissue paper.

Seams

There are several ways of seaming lace:

1. If lace is completely underlined treat the lace and underlining as one piece of fabric. Baste and stay stitch the two layers together about one half inch from seam edge. Use a plain seam and press open.
2. Lace may be sewn with a regular seam and bound with fine net.
3. It may be sewn on the regular seam line. Then another row of machine stitching is sewn 1/8" to 1/4" from the first row. The seam is trimmed close to the second row of stitching. A zigzag stitch might be used on the second row of stitching.



4. Another method is to match two pieces of lace by laying them flat on the right side and machine stitching or hand stitching around the pattern. This gives the effect of a continuous design.

Hems

The type of hem finish will depend on the underlining and the flare or fullness of the skirt.

1. If lace and underfabric are treated as one piece, turn hem as for any underlined fabric and hand stitch edge of hem to underlining.
2. Hand rolled edges on hems enhance the fragile effect of lace.
3. Another method suggests turning up 5/8" on lower edge and basting close to the fold. Baste both edges of 1/4" horsehair braid to skirt on the wrong side. On the outside stitch along basting lines. Remove bastings. Trim lace edge close to horsehair braid.

Sleeves

1. If sleeves are underlined treat as any other underlined fabric.
2. A fine cord seam can be made in lace by stitching on the regular seam line of sleeve or armhole. Then sew a second row 1/8" from the first stitching. Trim seam to second row of stitching. Do a fine whipping stitch by hand, catching both lines of stitching at once.

Fasteners

The type of fastener will depend on the style of garment and underlining. Loop button holes and tiny covered buttons give an elegant effect. Lightweight zippers that are hand sewn give a fashionable touch.

Pressing

Use regular methods of pressing. Temperature of iron depends on fiber content of lace and underlining. Embroidered lace should be placed right side down over heavy padding, such as several thicknesses of toweling.

Lace Used as a Trim

Insertions. Baste lace to fabric. Use tiny hemming stitches to sew edges in place. Cut away material under lace. Leave enough so edges of fabric can be rolled and whipped. Insertions of coarser heavier lace may be machine stitched in place.

Lace Edging. Along the sewing edge there is generally a thread that can be pulled to shirr the lace saving an extra operation of gathering stitching. Then overcast lace to finished edge. On an unfinished edge hold fabric toward you, roll hem and sew on lace in one operation using an overhand stitch.